

OPENING STATEMENT

**Gordon H. Mansfield
Nominee, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
Before the
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
May 16, 2001**

Chairman Specter, Senator Rockefeller, and members of the Committee, Good Morning. I am Gordon H. Mansfield, nominee for Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I wish to add my thanks to you for the expeditious scheduling of this hearing. I also wish to express my thanks to President George W. Bush for nominating me to serve in this position. I am also grateful for the confidence and trust demonstrated by Secretary Anthony J. Principi in requesting my nomination. He has truly energized this Agency and laid out a vision for serving veterans. I look forward to aiding him in fulfilling that vision, should I be confirmed.

I believe I am qualified to fill this position by reason of my education, my experience and my commitment to service on behalf of our Nation's veterans. As a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States, I believe I have the background to understand the needs of fellow veterans. As a combat wounded veteran, who is a user of the Departments programs and services, I believe I can bring a special insight to my position. My education, including law school, and professional experience, working for a veterans service organization as an Associate Legislative Director, Associate Executive Director for Government Relations and as Executive Director have allowed me to understand

and appreciate the role that this Committee and the Congress play in providing the needed authorizations and funds for the medical services and benefit programs due our veterans.

The Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs' mission is to serve as the principal advisor to the Secretary and other senior Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) officials concerning all legislative and congressional liaison matters, and to develop productive working relationships with Members of Congress and their staffs, as well as, congressional committees, in support of VA's goals to better serve our Nation's veterans. I believe my role in accomplishing this mission is to ensure that the dedicated, professional employees of the office are empowered and supported in their work to achieve our defined goals

Should I be confirmed, I view my role as leading an experienced, professional and knowledgeable staff whose functions are to advise and assist in maintaining open and effective communications between the various elements of the Agency and the United States Congress. I intend to carry out that role with diligence and enthusiasm. I look forward to working with the Members of these Committees and their respective staffs to achieve our common goal of serving our Nation's Veterans.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement, I will answer any questions you may have.